

United States Military Draft Records of the Civil War, World War I, and World War II

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Objectives

- Provide a historical overview of conscription in the United States.
- To help you better understand the genealogical value of military draft records.
- Review each of the draft registrations, discuss the records that were created, and explore the information they contain.
- Teach the many ways you can access draft records today.

Introduction

History of Conscription

- Conscription is compulsory registration and is also referred to as the draft.
- The United States has *successfully* employed *national* conscription for five conflicts—the Civil War, World War I (WWI), World War II (WWII), the Korean War and the Vietnam War.
- For the Civil War, both the Union and Confederate armies implemented drafts. The Confederate Congress passed the first conscription law in April 1862. The following year, in March 1863, the United States passed the nation's first draft law known as The Enrollment Act.
- Following the Civil War, the second conscription law passed by the federal government was The Selective Service Act of 1917. It authorized the president to implement a national draft.
- The Selective Service System was responsible for facilitating the drafts of World War I and World War II.

Why Use Draft Records in Genealogical Research

- Military draft records identify men who were *eligible* for service, and not just those who served.
- Millions of men can be identified in draft records.

Draft Record Statistics		
War	Individuals in Draft Records	Years of Birth for Possible Military Service
Civil War	776,829 Union 400,000 Confederate	1801 – 1849
World War I	24 million	1858 – 1900
World War II	50 million	1881 – 1927 1877 – 1897 <i>Old Man's Draft</i>

- An abundance of genealogical information can be found in these records.

Information Needed to Begin Research

- The first and last name of an individual.
- The war in which they may have been drafted.
- The state an individual resided in. Indexes can aid in identifying the locality.

The Civil War – Drafts

The Confederate Army

- Eleven Confederate states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.
- There were approximately 750,000 to 1.2 million individuals enlisted in the Confederate Army. Roughly 400,000 men were drafted.

Confederacy Draft Registrations		
Registration No.	Date	Age Requirement
1 st Registration	April 1862	Males age 18 – 35
2 nd Registration	September 1862	Males age 18 – 45
3 rd Registration	February 1864	Males age 17 – 50

The Union Army

- Twenty Union states—California, Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Wisconsin.
- There were approximately 2.2 million individuals enlisted in the Union Army, 776,829 men are listed in the draft records, and about 47,000 were conscripted.

Union Draft Registrations		
Registration No.	Date	Age Requirement
1 st Registration	July 1863	Males age 20 – 45
2 nd Registration	March 1864	Males age 20 – 45
3 rd Registration	July 1864	Males age 20 – 45
4 th Registration	December 1864	Males age 20 – 45

- Registrants were divided into three classes:
Class I: single males age 20 – 35, and unmarried males age 36 – 44
Class II: married males age 36 – 44
Class III: male volunteers
- Information included: individual's name, place of residence, age, occupation, marital status, place of birth, previous military status, and possibly a physical description.

General Points of Consideration

- Border states—Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and West Virginia (after 1863) individuals may have served on either side.
- Substitutes—some individuals paid a substitute to serve for them.

Locating Civil War Draft Records

Confederacy

- Not many conscription records for the Confederacy have survived. For further exploration, search the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 109 (War Department Collection of Confederate Records).
 - Henry Putney Beers, *The Confederacy: A Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America* (listed under Resources—Books).
 - James C. Neagles, *Confederate Research Sources: A Guide to Archive Collections* (listed under Resources—Books).

Union

- Conscription records, known as consolidated lists, for the Union were created by congressional district. They are housed at NARA, RG 110 (Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, Civil War).
 - *Congressional Directory, 38th Congress, 2d Session, 1865*, available in digital format at FamilySearch.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1358330?availability=Family%20History%20Library>
 - Ancestry: *U.S., Civil War Draft Registration Records, 1863-1865*. This collection was created from the *Consolidated Lists of Civil War Draft Registrations, 1863-1865*, housed at NARA in RG10. This collection is searchable by name.
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1666/>

World War I Drafts

Background Context

- Approximately 4.7 million U.S. servicemen fought in WWI, 24 million registered for the draft, and 2.7 million served in the armed forces by conscription. Males from all 50 states and U.S. territories who met the age requirements were expected to register, including those who were not U.S. citizens.
- Five-step draft process: (1) Registration, (2) Selection, (3) Classification, (4) Induction, (5) Entrainment.

Draft Registrations of World War I		
Registration No.	Date	Age Requirement
1 st Registration	5 June 1917	Males age 21 – 30
2 nd Registration	5 June 1918	Males who turned 21 since the first registration
	24 August 1918	A supplemental registration for those who turned 21 after the 5 June 1918 registration
3 rd Registration	12 September 1918	Males age 18 – 45

- Draft Registration Card Coding System — A = first draft, B = second draft, C = third draft. Each state was designated a number, followed by a district board number, followed by a local board number. *C-43-1-27 = Third Draft, State of Utah, District 1, Local Board 27.*
- If a registrant was of African descent the front left corner of registration card A or B was torn off.
- Five key genealogical benefits of WWI draft registration cards: (1) Relevant individual details, (2) Precise locality, (3) Birth record substitute, (4) Condition of citizenship, (5) Family connections.

Locating WWI Draft Records

- Draft records of the Selective Service System for World War I are housed at NARA, RG 163 (Records of the Selective Service System, WWI). They have also been filmed and form part of NARA's microfilm publication series M1509.
- WWI Draft Registration Cards
 - FamilySearch has a microfilm copy of NARA's M1509 series. It can be browsed digitally by locality from the FamilySearch Library catalog. This collection has also been added to FamilySearch's Historical Records Collections: *United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*. This collection is searchable by surname, year, and place of birth.
<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1968530>
 - Ancestry: *U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918*
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/6482/>
 - Fold3: *WWI Draft Registration Cards*
<https://www.fold3.com/title/959/wwi-draft-registration-cards>

World War II Drafts

Background Context

- Approximately 16.1 million individuals served in WWII, 50 million men registered for the draft, and 10 million men were inducted.
- In the fall of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the first peacetime Selective Service Act due to increasing global conflicts. Between October 1940 and December 1943 the Selective Service required all men ages 18 – 65 to register for the draft.
- The drafts of WWII followed the same system as WWI, implementing local and district draft boards under the direction of the Selective Service System.

Draft Registrations of World War II		
Registration No.	Date	Age Requirement
1 st Registration	16 October 1940	Males age 21 – 35 within the continental United States
2 nd Registration	1 July 1941	Males who turned 21 since the first registration
3 rd Registration	16 February 1942	Males age 20 – 45 who had not previously registered

4 th Registration <i>Old Man's Draft</i>	27 April 1942	Males age 45 – 64 not eligible for military service
5 th Registration	30 June 1942	Males age 18 – 20
6 th Registration	10 – 31 December 1942	Males who turned 18 after 12 November 1942
Additional Registration	16 November – 31 December 1943	Male citizens living abroad age 18 – 45

- 4th Registration, *Old Man's Draft* – The registration was not intended for military service, rather to identify men for national service on the home front.
- Draft Registration Card Coding System — note the letter that precedes the serial number: 1st Registration and Additional Registration = no letter, 2nd Registration = S, 3rd = T, 4th = U, 5th = N, 6th = W.
- WWII Draft Registration Cards may contain the following genealogical information: name, age, date and place of birth, residence, employer, physical description, and name of registrant's nearest relative.

Locating WWII Draft Records

- Draft records of the Selective Service System for World War II are housed at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), RG 147 (Records of the Selective Service System), in two groupings. The first group contains the 4th Registration (*Old Man's draft*), for those men whose birthdates range from 28 April 1877 – 16 February 1897. The second grouping includes the remainder of registrations, who birthdates range from 17 February 1897 – 31 July 1927.
- 4th Registration, *Old Man's Draft*
 - Ancestry: *U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942*.
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/1002/>
Fold3: *WWII "Old Man's Draft" Registration Cards*
<https://www.fold3.com/title/765/wwii-old-mans-draft-registration-cards>
 - Both Ancestry and Fold3's collections include the following states and territories: AK, AZ, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, LA, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NY, NYC, ND, OH, OK, OR, PA, PR, RI, SD, TX, UT, VT, VA, WA, DC, WV, WI, WY.
WWII draft registration cards were never microfilmed and subsequently destroyed for the following states: AL, FL, GA, ME, MS, NM, NC, SC, TN.
 - This collection can also be accessed on FamilySearch, though not all states are included.
- 1st – 3rd, 5th and 6th Registrations (men age 18 – 44).
 - FamilySearch Historical Record Collection: *United States World War II Draft Registration Records – Coverage Table*
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_World_War_II_Draft_Registration_Records_-_Coverage_Table
 - Fold3: *WWII Draft Registration Cards* (35.6 million)
<https://www.fold3.com/title/816/wwii-draft-registration-cards> (in color!)
 - Ancestry: *U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947* (54.2 million)
<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2238/> (in color!). Ancestry has the most complete collection of WWII draft registration cards.

Limitations

- Accuracy of information, such as name, age and birthdate should be cautiously considered. Beside the original signature, all information about the registrant is transcribed.
- Draft records are not military service records.
- Those who evaded the draft will not be found in these record collections.

Resources

Draft Record Collections

- FamilySearch: <https://www.familysearch.org/>
- Ancestry, Military Records: <https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/39/>
- Fold3: <https://www.fold3.com/>
- National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): <https://www.archives.gov/>
- National Personnel Records Center (NPRC): <https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/military-personnel>

Articles

- FamilySearch Wiki, *Union Draft Records*:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Union_Draft_Records
- Michael T. Meier, "Civil War Draft Records: Exemptions and Enrollments," *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives* 26 no. 4 (Winter 1994): 282-286.
- FamilySearch Wiki, *United States World War I Draft Records*:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_World_War_I_Draft_Records
- United States, World War I Draft Registration Records [RG 163], Inventory National Archives at College Park:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/index.php?title=United_States_World_War_I_Draft_Registration_Records,_Inventory_National_Archives_at_College_Park
- Cara Jones, "Sign Here Soldier – World War I Draft Registration Cards," *Crossroads* 15 no. 2 (Spring 2020): 6-20.
- FamilySearch Wiki, *United States World War II Draft Records*:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/United_States_World_War_II_Draft_Records

Books

- United States, National Archives and Records Administration, *Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1983).
- James C. Neagles, *U.S. Military Records* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry Incorp., 1994).
- Lt. Col. Marvin A. Kreidberg and 1st Lt. Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army 1775-1945* (Washington D.C.: Dept. of the Army, 1955).
- United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, c.1880-1901).

- Henry Putney Beers, *The Confederacy: A Guide to the Archives of the Government of the Confederate States of America* (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986).
- James C. Neagles, *Confederate Research Sources: A Guide to Archive Collections*, 2 ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry Incorp., 1997).
- Albert Burton Moore, *Conscription and Conflict In The Confederacy* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1924).
- United States National Archives and Records Administration, *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau*, RG 110 [Civil War], 5 vols. (Washington, D.C.: The National Archives, 1966-1967).
- Eugene C. Murdock, *One Million Men: The Civil War Draft in the North* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, c1971).
- John J. Newman, *Uncle, We Are Ready: Registering America's Men 1917-1918* (North Salt Lake, Utah: Heritage Quest, 2001).
- John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise An Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987).
- Richard G. Wood comp., *Records of the Selective Service System, 1940-1947* [RG 147] (Washington, D.C.: The National Archives, 1951).